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PAGE 01 STATE 144286
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PAGE 02 STATE 144286

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 580 - JUNE 7, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. LEBANON. FOLLOWING THE ASSAD-SARKIS MEETING LAST WEEK, THE SYRTAN PRESS, PRESUMABLY WITH OFFICIAL ENCOURAGEMENT, IS PRESSING THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TO BE MORE DECISIVE. THAWRA'S EDITOR, FOR EXAMPLE, LISTED THREE PREREQUISITES FOR LEBANON'S POLITICAL WELL-BEING:

(A) CONSOLIDATION OF LEBANON'S UNITY;

(B) INSURING THE LEGITIMACY OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WHICH HINGES ON THE CREATION OF A NATIONAL ARMY AND EQUAL APPLICATIONS OF THE LAW TO ALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS; AND

(C) ISRAEL'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE SOUTH, ON WHICH THE FIRST TWO CONDITIONS DEPEND.

2. THE EDITOR OBSERVED THAT "IT IS HIGH TIME LEBANON ITSELF SHOULD LEAD THE BATTLE FOR ATTAINING THESE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 144286

OBJECTIVES. TO THIS END SARKIS WILL LAY DOWN THE CRITERIA FOR A NATIONAL COMMITMENT TO ALL FACTIONS AND WILL JUDGE THEIR RESPONSES IN TERMS OF THEIR QUALITY AND QUANTITY."

3. THE SYRIANS WANT THE LEBANESE TO MOVE THE LEBANESE ARMY SOUTH. LEBANESE AND SYRIAN ARMY OFFICERS ARE MEETING DAILY TO PLAN THE MOVE. ACCORDING TO THE SYRIAN PRESS, DAMASCUS EXPECTS THAT, ONCE LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY IN THE SOUTH IS ESTABLISHED, ALL LEBANESE FACTIONS WILL COOPERATE WITH SARKIS IN BRINGING ABOUT A NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION.

4. THE SYRIANS APPEAR TO BE OVERLY OPTIMISTIC, HOWEVER. THE LEBANESE ARMY IS NOT VERY LIKELY TO MOVE SOUTH UNTIL AT LEAST AFTER THE ISRAELIS WITHDRAW ON JUNE 13, IF THEN. THE LEBANESE ARE CONCERNED, FOR EXAMPLE, ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF OPPOSITION TO SUCH A MOVE BY LEBANESE POLITICIANS, AND THEY ARE AWARE THAT SYRIAN SUPPORT WAS NECESSARY TO OVERCOME SUCH OPPOSITION. THEY ARE ALSO CONCERNED THAT MAJOR HADDAD WOULD INTERFERE WITH UNIFIL'S ENTRY INTO THE PART OF LEBANON CURRENTLY OCCUPIED BY ISRAEL.

5. IN ADDRESSING BOTH THE HADDAD AND INTERNAL PROBLEMS, THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO BE RELYING ON OTHERS TO TAKE FORCEFUL ACTION. THERE IS LITTLE INDICATION THAT SARKIS HIMSELF IS WILLING TO MAKE OR IMPLEMENT TOUGH DECISIONS. EVEN IF HE DID, HE PROBABLY WOULD RETREAT IN FACE OF DOMESTIC, PALESTINIAN, OR ISRAELI OPPOSITION.

6. MOREOVER, ACCORDING TO LEBANESE LEADERS, IMPORTANT QUESTIONS WERE NOT ANSWERED IN THE SARKIS-ASSAD MEETING. CONTRARY TO PRESS REPORTS, THE SYRIANS REMAIN RELUCTANT TO SEND THEIR FORCES FURTHER SOUTH, AND THE LEBANESE DID NOT ASK THEM TO.

7. THERE APPEARS TO BE JUSTIFIABLE CONCERN IN BEIRUT
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 144286

AND DAMASCUS ABOUT THE ISRAELI REACTION TO SUCH A MOVE. EMBASSY TEL AVIV REPORTS THAT THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT IS DIVIDED OVER THE QUESTION OF A SYRIAN MOVE SOUTH. THIS DEPLOYMENT WOULD NOT CONSTITUTE A SIGNIFICANT MILITARY THREAT TO ISRAEL BECAUSE OF UNIFIL'S PRESENCE. HOWEVER, THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF SUCH A MOVE BY THE SYRIAN ARMY WOULD BE VERY SERIOUS. EVEN IF THE SYRIANS WERE TO MOVE TO THE LITANI, THIS WOULD STILL LEAVE OPEN THE QUESTION OF TYRE. THIS TOWN WOULD HAVE TO BE CONTROLLED BY A PARTY OTHER THAN THE PLO BEFORE THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON COULD BE STABILIZED. (SECRET)

8. WEST BANK. THE ISRAELI MILITARY GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO BE ADOPTING NEW TACTICS ON THE WEST BANK, ACCORDING TO OUR CONSULATE GENERAL IN JERUSALEM. THE ISRAELIS SEEM TO BE PROJECTING AN IMAGE OF ATTEMPTING TO COOPERATE WITH THE MAYORS ON SOCIAL-ECONOMIC MATTERS WHILE MAINTAINING A TOUGH LINE ON SECURITY. OUR CONSULATE GENERAL COMMENTS THAT THE GOVERNOR'S POSITION APPARENTLY DERIVES FROM ORDERS OF HIS SUPERIORS RATHER THAN ANY PERSONAL LIBERAL TENDENCY. THE NEW POLICY IS REMINISCENT OF DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN'S CONCESSIONS IN RAMALLAH ON HIS VISIT THERE IN FEBRUARY. (CONFIDENTIAL)

9. ISRAEL. AFTER A YEAR OF THE MARKET-ORIENTED ECONOMIC POLICIES OF THE LIKUD GOVERNMENT, THE ISRAELI ECONOMY DOES NOT LOOK MUCH DIFFERENT THAN IT WOULD HAVE UNDER THE LABOR ALIGNMENT. THERE HAS BEEN WIDE PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF THE IDEA OF LESS GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE IN THE ECONOMY AND MORE PRIVATE INITIATIVE. IN AN EMBASSY TEL AVIV ASSESSMENT, IDENTIFIABLE EXAMPLES OF THIS HAVING OCCURRED, HOWEVER, ARE FEW. LIKUD ACHIEVEMENTS IN OTHER ECONOMIC AREAS HAVE BEEN SPOTY; THE BALANCE OF PAYMENTS
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 05 STATE 144286

IS MUCH IMPROVED AND ECONOMIC GROWTH HAS HIT 6 PERCENT, BUT INFLATION CONTINUES UNABATED AND PRIVATE CONSUMPTION IS RISING. THE GOVERNMENT HAS RECEIVED LESS CRITICISM OF ITS ECONOMIC POLICY THAN WOULD NORMALLY HAVE BEEN THE CASE, DUE TO THE PUBLIC FOCUS ON THE PEACE PROCESS. (CONFIDENTIAL)

10. JORDAN. AN EGYPTIAN EMBASSY OFFICIAL TOLD EMBASSY AMMAN THAT CAIRO HAS INSTRUCTED ITS LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES TO WATCH CLOSELY THE PHENOMENON OF JORDAN-LIBYAN COOPERATION. HE SAID THAT EGYPT'S REACTION WAS MILD SURPRISE AND THAT EGYPT WAS INTERESTED IN THE DETAILS FROM A MILITARY/TACTICAL ANGLE. EMBASSY AMMAN UNDERSTANDS THAT THE SAUDIS, MEANWHILE, HAVE MENTIONED THEIR CONCERN TO THE JORDANIANS REGARDING MILITARY INVOLVEMENT WITH THE LIBYANS. (CONFIDENTIAL) VANCE

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